



Embassy of the United States of America

Bul. Ilinden bb.
1000 Skopje
(+389 2) 3116 180
consularskopje@state.gov
<http://macedonia.usembassy.gov>

American Citizen Services Newsletter September 2008

Safety and Security Situation	1
Upcoming Embassy Holidays	2
Welcome Message from the Consul	2
Register to Vote NOW!	2
How to Verify Voter Registration Status Online	3
Introducing a New Online Appointment System for ACS	5
Travel Document Tips	5
New Department of Homeland Security Initiatives	5
U.S. Passport Cards	6
Leaving Macedonia	7

SAFETY AND SECURITY SITUATION

While the security situation in Macedonia is currently stable, travelers should always be alert for unusual behavior and other possible indicators that something out of the ordinary might be happening. Americans should avoid demonstrations and other sites, such as roadblocks, where large crowds are gathered, particularly those involving political causes or striking workers. While overall levels of crime throughout Macedonia remain low, there have been occasional incidents of home and vehicle break-ins. We remind all American citizens to lock their windows and doors at all times and not to leave any valuables in plain sight in their vehicle.

Acts of violence in recent months in public venues, such as cafes and nightclubs, appear to be isolated incidents; however, all Americans are urged to remain alert and observant when in public. If you are inadvertently caught in this situation, take the following actions: remain calm, seek a position of cover (under a table, etc.), avoid confrontation, leave if you can safely do so, try to stay with your group, and call the police.

The Worldwide Caution issued for American citizens abroad by the U.S. Department of State regarding the threat of terrorist acts has been updated as of July 16, 2008. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's website at <http://travel.state.gov>, where up-to-date [Worldwide Caution Public Announcements](#), [Travel Warnings and Public Announcements](#) can be found.

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

The Embassy will be closed for the following holidays:

- Ramadan Bajram - Tuesday, September 30
- Columbus Day - Monday, October 13
- Macedonian Revolutionary Struggle Day - Thursday, October 23
- Veteran's Day - Tuesday, November 11
- Thanksgiving Day - Thursday, November 27
- St. Clement of Ohrid Day - Monday, December 8

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE CONSUL

Hi to all!! I arrived in Skopje in mid-August 2008 as the new Chief of the Consular Section and will be here for the next two years. The provision of services in support of the welfare and safety of American citizens abroad has always been and continues to be our highest priority in the Consular Section. In order that we can keep you informed of various issues, and, most importantly, in case we need to contact you in the event of an emergency, we strongly encourage you to register with the Embassy, either in person or using the online form found on our website: <http://macedonia.usembassy.gov>. We are also here to help you with routine services like passport renewals or notarial services. We also are introducing a new appointment system for routine American Citizen services so we can better serve you. Look for more details about this new service in this newsletter.

I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you in the coming months.

Sincerely,
Lauren May

REGISTER TO VOTE NOW!

American citizens should register to vote **now** for the November 4, 2008 presidential and general elections. Many states close voter registration 30 days before the general election. Don't forget the time it takes for voting forms to reach the U.S. by mail.

Voters who have not yet registered to vote and requested an absentee ballot should complete a Federal Postcard Application (FPCA) on the Federal Voting Assistance Program's website at www.fvap.gov. You may also pick up a hard copy of the FPCA from any U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

You should also complete a new Federal Postcard Application if you have moved or changed your name since the last time you voted.

FPCAs may be mailed to your local voting officials in the U.S. through the regular international mail or from any U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Some states also accept FPCAs by fax or e-mail.

Voting

Your local voting officials should mail your absentee ballot 30 to 45 days before the November 4 general election to your overseas address. Return your voted ballot as early as possible. Be aware of your state's ballot receipt deadline, as well as any postmarking requirements.

Emergency Ballots

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) serves as an emergency ballot for voters who registered in time but fail to receive an official ballot from local election officials. You can access the FWAB using www.fvap.gov as well.

Questions?

The **Voting Assistance Officer** at the U.S. Embassy Skopje is also always available to answer questions about absentee voting. To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, call (02) 3116-180 or send an e-mail to VoteSkopje@state.gov.

HOW TO VERIFY VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS ONLINE

Many of the States and U.S. Territories are making it easy to determine voter registration status online. Listed below are the twenty-eight states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, which have web sites where voters may check their registration status. The website addresses listed below are subject to change.

Please check <http://www.fvap.gov/vao/stregissites.html> for updates.

Arizona: https://servicearizona.com/webapp/evoter/select_language.do

Arkansas: <https://www.voterview.ar-nova.org/>

Colorado:

<http://www.sos.state.co.us/Voter/voterHome.do;jsessionid=0000Q1Bp7qrdd1E9ysKzDFyDdlc:121vl9gps>

Delaware: <http://pollingplace.delaware.gov/>

District of Columbia: www.dcboee.org/voterreg/vic_step1.asp

Georgia: www.sos.state.ga.us/cgi-bin/Locator.asp

Indiana:

<http://www.indianavoters.com/PublicSite/Public/FT1/PublicLookupMain.aspx?Link=Polling>

Iowa: www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/VoterReg/RegToVote/search.aspx

Kansas: <https://myvoteinfo.voteks.org/>

Kentucky: <https://cdcbp.ky.gov/VICWeb/index.jsp>

Louisiana: <https://pollinglocator.sos.louisiana.gov/>

Maryland: <http://mdelections.umbc.edu/> Note: This site has a sample ballot.

Michigan: <http://michigan.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1633-49313--,00.html>

Nebraska: <https://www.votercheck.necvr.ne.gov/>

Nevada: www.nvsos.gov/elections/

New Mexico: <https://voterview.state.nm.us/>

New York: <https://voterlookup.elections.state.ny.us/votersearch.aspx>

North Carolina: www.sboe.state.nc.us/VoterLookup.aspx NOTE: You can check the status of your absentee ballot at this site also.

Ohio: www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/voterquery.aspx?page=361

Pennsylvania: www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/cwp/view.asp?a=1206&Q=446253&sureNav=|

Puerto Rico: <http://cee.ceepur.org/consulta/default.aspx> NOTE: This site is in Spanish and you need your voter registration number to verify your status.

Rhode Island: www.sec.state.ri.us/vic/

South Carolina: <https://webprod.cio.sc.gov/SCSECVoterWeb/voterInformationSearch.do>

South Dakota: <http://apps.sd.gov/applications/st25cers/>

Texas: <https://voterinfo.sos.state.tx.us/voterws/viw/faces/SearchSelectionVoter.jsp>

Utah: <http://gva1.utah.gov/elections/polling.aspx>

Virginia:

<https://www.voterinfo.sbe.virginia.gov/PublicSite/Public/FT2/PublicLookup.aspx?Link=Registration>

Washington: <https://wei.secstate.wa.gov/onlinevoterregistration/Registration.aspx>

West Virginia: www.wvvotes.com/voters/am-i-registered.php

Wisconsin:

<http://elections.state.wi.us/category.asp?linkcatid=1773&linkid=270&locid=47>

NOTE: The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the United States Federal Government, United States Department of Defense or the Federal Voting Assistance Program of the linked web sites, or the information, products or services contained therein. The Federal Voting Assistance Program does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations.

INTRODUCING A NEW ONLINE APPOINTMENT SYSTEM FOR AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

In order to better serve you, we are introducing a new appointment system for routine American Citizen services beginning on October 6, 2008. You will find the link for the appointment system on our website

http://macedonia.usembassy.gov/information_for_travelers.html after October 1, 2008.

As of October 6, you will need to make an appointment for services such as routine passport applications, extra pages, consular reports of birth abroad, notariats, and federal benefits. By scheduling these appointments, we can ensure that we have sufficient time to attend to your requirements and hopefully reduce unnecessary waiting time on your part. In addition, we will be able to contact you in advance and provide detailed information on what you will need to bring to your appointment. While there will be a short adjustment period as we move to this new system, we believe that in the long term it will allow us to provide you with better and more efficient service.

TRAVEL DOCUMENT TIPS

The following article was posted on the www.smartertravel.com website.

"Go beyond copies of your passport documents and medical records: In case something goes wrong on your trip, it's always a good idea to have extra copies of your passport, itinerary, key medical records, and the like. If your bags get lost, stolen, or are simply delayed, though, having all those extra copies stashed away in your luggage may not do you much good. There are two solutions that involve a lot less paper..."

Please go to this site for the full article: www.smartertravel.com/travel-advice/go-beyond-copies-of-your-passport-docs-and-medical-records.html?id=2517885

NEW DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY INITIATIVES

The Department of Homeland Security has recently announced the launch of three initiatives – the Global Entry pilot program, the Passenger Service Program, and an expanded Model Ports Initiative – intended to strengthen customer service at U.S. ports of entry.

Global Entry is a customer service and security program designed to expedite the screening and processing of pre-approved, low-risk travelers entering the U.S. Currently only U.S. Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) are eligible to join. The pilot started June 6, 2008 at George Bush Intercontinental, John F. Kennedy International and Washington Dulles International airports. Global Entry applicants will voluntarily provide their biographic and biometric information, undergo a background check and complete an interview with a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer. Once accepted, Global Entry travelers can use a kiosk at any of the three pilot airports to verify their identity electronically and make any needed customs declarations. CBP has been accepting applications at www.cbp.gov/travel since May 12, 2008.

Under the new Passenger Service Program, CBP Program Service Managers will serve as a dedicated point of contact for identifying and resolving passenger issues. The initiative promotes customer service techniques in officer interactions with the traveling public, and includes joint efforts with the private sector and industry stakeholders to reduce wait times through the use of improved signage and technology. The program will be established at CBP's top 20 Model Ports.

The Department also is expanding the Model Ports Initiative to 18 additional airports. Originally established in 2006 as part of the Rice-Chertoff Initiative, Model Ports has enhanced border security with the use of the new technology while streamlining security processes and facilitating travel for legitimate visitors. In addition to brochures and increased signage, a new video, currently available in Spanish, French, German and English, will assist travelers through the customs and immigration process by providing practical information about the entry process and required entry documents and forms.

In a related effort, CBP is providing wait times online at <http://www.cbp.gov> for 16 of the busiest international airports and pedestrian wait times for 12 land border crossings in Arizona, California, and Texas.

U.S. PASSPORT CARDS

Passport Services, Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State began production of U.S. Passport Cards on July 14, 2008. To date, the U.S. Department of State has received and adjudicated well over 350,000 applications for the Passport Card since February 1, 2008. Customers will receive their Passport Card between now and early September.

The passport card was designed to meet the requirements of the land and sea phase of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) which becomes effective June 2009. The card meets the specific needs of U.S. border resident communities. It facilitates entry and expedites document processing at U.S. land and sea ports-of-entry when arriving from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean region and Bermuda.

The passport card is not valid for international travel by air. It will otherwise carry the rights and privileges of the U.S. passport book and will be adjudicated to the exact same standards.

The card has the same validity period as a passport book: ten years for an adult (age 16 and older), five years for children age 15 and younger.

First-time applicants will pay \$45 for adult cards and \$35 for children. (These amounts include the \$25 execution/acceptance fee.)

If eligible, previous passport book holders can apply for their first passport card as a renewal by mail for a \$20 application fee.

To facilitate the frequent travel of U.S. citizens living in border communities and to meet DHS's operational needs at land borders, the passport card contains a vicinity-read radio frequency identification (RFID) chip.

There is no personal information written to the RFID chip. The chip points to a stored record in secure government databases.

With RFID technology, Customs and Border Protection inspectors will be able to access photographs and other biographical information stored in secure government databases before the traveler reaches the inspection station.

The passport card uses state-of-the-art security features to prevent against the possibility of counterfeiting and forgery. In addition, a protective sleeve is provided with each passport card to protect against unauthorized reading or tracking of the card when it is not in use.

At the moment, the U.S. Embassy Skopje is not able to process applications for the passport card. Once we are able to process such applications, an announcement will appear in this newsletter and on our website: <http://macedonia.usembassy.gov>.

LEAVING MACEDONIA?

If you are departing from Macedonia after a long stay here, and you formally registered your stay with the U.S. Embassy in Skopje, please be sure to "cancel" your registration when you leave Macedonia.

If you have registered online, you can cancel your registration yourself by visiting the following website: <http://travelregistration.state.gov>, or by e-mailing us at consularskopje@state.gov



This newsletter is an unofficial and informal source of practical information for American citizens residing in Macedonia. If you have comments, questions, or suggestions, please contact the Consular Section at (02) 311-6180, or at consularskopje@state.gov. This newsletter is also available on the American Citizens Services page of our website at <http://macedonia.usembassy.gov>